

Dear Subscriber,

These are very scary financial times we live in. As business people, I suspect that many of you are experiencing the effects of a downturn in the economy. This month's topic discusses the importance of employee motivation. Why? Because in times like these with layoffs and other negative events occurring daily, FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) can cause employee morale and performance to drop significantly. Conversely, a motivated staff can help you in critical areas like customer retention and cost control as well as be a source of new ideas. As the leader it is your job to see that your people are sufficiently motivated to help you make it through the tough times. The article below provides some tips to help you with motivation.

Remember, Score is here to provide free counseling and low cost workshops to help you start and manage your business. Our counselors have hundreds of years of business experience to draw on. All you need to do is schedule a mentoring session.

One final note, if you have any thoughts or comments on these Ask Score newsletters (i.e. are they useful, what would make them better, etc.), we would welcome a reply

Warmest regards,

Ross Lagattuta
Chairman, SCORE Chapter 243

Ask SCORE
Motivation Matters in Getting the Best from Your
Employees

One of the first and most important lessons an entrepreneur learns is that employees really are a small business's most important resource. In fact, the business literally cannot succeed without them. Their talent, skills, and effort truly add value to your products or services, allowing you to focus on the planning and creative issues that will move your business forward.

Unlike your equipment, computers, and other resources, however, you can't

simply turn employees on and off for business hours. All employees need a clear understanding of their role in your business and how it can grow, plus the motivation to achieve and, even better, exceed those expectations. That's why you, as the business owner, also hold the title of "Chief Communicator and Motivator."

It's important to have direct contact to make your message clear. Some owners try to save time and manage by email. That works only to a point. But direct contact builds trust and rapport.

Establish your business "mantra" and keep repeating it. Don't assume that everyone involved in the business understands and buys into the mission as you do. After all, you're the one who created it, not them. They haven't lived and breathed every detail as you have.

Here's one simple step to make certain you communicate clearly. Instead of asking if an employee understood your instructions, ask what specific steps the person will take to complete the task. That way you can be absolutely certain they not only understood, but also plan to complete the assignment in an appropriate way.

Avoid constantly criticizing employees. That hurts morale and can make people less motivated. If you highlight the positive and correct mistakes without getting personal, employees are more likely to deliver what you want.

While a good manager is also visible, it's important to not make it appear that you are micromanaging. A quick chat about work and non-work issues during a stroll through your business is all the positive reinforcement most employees need. They'll feel more comfortable about coming to you with questions, concerns, or suggestions. Augment the informality with individual and group meetings to share information and updates, brainstorm ideas, and simply get to know each other. Such interaction will not only help re-energize your staff, but the boss as well!

In challenging times, it is especially important to keep the communication lines open. As much as possible, you should share the challenges you are facing with your people. Often they will be willing to step it up a notch when they feel informed and valued.